**Drought in Tanzania**

**Dar Es Salaam**, *11 May 2006 -* WFP today urgently appealed for US$16.6 million to feed 565,000 people in Tanzania facing severe hunger because of drought.

After very poor rainy seasons in 2005, when food and cash crop production plummeted by 50-70 percent, this year’s annual long rains across much of the country faltered and closed below normal.

**One meal a day**

With cereal prices around 85 percent higher than average and huge numbers of livestock either dead or severely emaciated, many families are eating only one meal a day.

“With more than half a million people in dire need, we really need funding now for this new emergency operation,” said Patrick Buckley, WFP Tanzania Country Director.

**Vulnerable**

The drought has hit more than 85 percent of districts in Tanzania. A rapid vulnerability assessment by government, non-governmental organisations and UN agencies in January found 3.7 million people needed food assistance – up from 600,000 in September 2005, just before the drought began.

One of the poorest countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania is particularly vulnerable to shocks such as drought. Even in normal times, rates of malnutrition among children are high.

**Nutrition survey**

A recent nutrition survey from the National Bureau of Statistics estimated that in 2004-05, weight for age malnutrition rates among children under five in Tanzania were 22 percent.

In northern pastoral areas, the rush to sell emaciated and dying stock at the peak of the drought caused cattle prices to plummet to a quarter of the norm, with some animals too thin to bring even throw-away prices.

Although prices are stabilizing with recent rains, without help to re-stock, the families who have lost their animals may struggle to feed themselves for years.